My Departure from Zionism

by Ernst Ludwig Pinner

My Departure from Zionism

An Account for My Zionist Friends

BY

Ernst Ludwig Pinner

1928

***Translator's note**: This essay was first published in 1928, in* Los vom Zionismus *(Abandon Zionism), a collection of essays published in Weimar Germany. The author of this essay died in 1947, in Israel, where his descendants dwell to this day.*

If I now cease to be a Zionist after twenty years of affiliation with the Zionist Movement, this will surprise you, my friends, who knew me as a reliable and convinced supporter of the movement, as a so-called good Zionist. I must expect expressions of alienation, even condemnation. After the many years of shared work, you have the right to know what drives me away from you. It should not be enough if I just tell you that over the years, the arguments of Constantin Brunner have increasingly gained influence over me. If I were to refer you to his books, I would have told you nothing. I must begin myself and explain to you what reasons, out of the many brought against Zionism, which you largely know, have particularly persuaded me. Firstly, it was the conviction that the goal of Zionism is practically unfeasible, and secondly, a new fundamental view of Jewish connections. The old problem of "Judaism and Germanism," which seemed long resolved, became alive for me again. The solution that I had held onto for twenty years appeared wrong. The confession to a Jewish nation became void as I had to learn that there is no Jewish nation, and that the nation to which we must confess can be none other than the German one. An old doubt within me had reawakened, one that needed to be overcome. You know it yourselves: One is only half a person if he does not acknowledge the nation to which he belongs.

Thus, the doubt had to be overcome, and the decision fell against you, against my previous conviction. Since with these pages I intend to provide less of a theoretical treatise but rather a personal report, allow me briefly to dwell on some personal memories. My Zionist development does not directly pertain to what I have to share with you. However, it belongs to the now completed development against Zionism, and perhaps also to the arguments insofar as it is similar to the development of many young Zionists and thus is typical for the solution we believed to have found and then found to be incorrect. Therefore, many personal aspects can serve as a mirror for you yourselves.

My Development towards Zionism

I remember that even as a boy I was seized by the contradiction between Germanism and Judaism. While I absorbed the great events of ancient German history with childlike enthusiasm, I felt that those from whom I descended had not fought in the great battles. I did not consider that the ancestors of my classmates had hardly been there either. The classmates were simply the Germans, and I was the Jew. I no longer know how this thought arose in me, perhaps as a result of the anti-Semitism that approached me in the form of boyish taunts. Even then, I thought about the elimination of anti-Semitism and dreamed as an eight-year-old that the Jews had received their own country where they could live among themselves and without their enemies. Thus, even as a boy, my belonging to Germanism had become a problem for me. While I no longer remember most things from that time, all this is still clear to me. For I still see myself in the classroom of the elementary school where Jewish religious instruction was given, at the moment when my doubts found a surprising and blissful resolution. The cantor and teacher of our small town, a fresh, clever, and kind man, resolved my doubts by explaining to me in his convincing manner: "We are Germans of the Jewish faith." I remember the great feeling of happiness in that hour: So, I am indeed German, so I do belong, and just as those evangelical and Catholic Germans, I am a Jewish German.

I was serious about Judaism, whose faith I fervently believed in. And I was just as serious about Germanism, which I did not want to be taken away from me despite the smoldering aversion of my schoolmates towards Jews. Some older Jewish classmates, supported by students, began to spread the national Jewish idea. I resisted for a long time. However, I joined the Jewish students' gymnastics club founded by the older ones because I felt obliged to practice gymnastics, and so I gradually came closer to the attitude that led to Zionism. I still resisted joining Zionism for a while, but I was a prepared soil. For when I then got Herzl's writings in hand, I let myself be overcome by the captivating speech of this man and became a Zionist. That was in the year 1905. Thus, I was a Zionist for twenty years and was so gladly. I have drawn much youthful joy and enthusiasm from this

attitude. I have sung countless times: "For Judah's honor our blood and life," and I meant it sincerely. Not a shadow of doubt came to me. In many a confrontation with opponents, I successfully defended the Zionist idea, and although I was denied any widespread effect, I still won many important people for the Zionist movement. I traveled with friends through Palestine in the spring of 1914 and was imbued with the idea of pioneering. All the greatness and beauty that the youthful heart wishes for itself and its people was concentrated in the idea of Zionism, and it seemed good to me. - But before I talk about what Zionism meant to me in detail, I want to report what became of my Germanism.

What I gained in immediate feeling for the Jewish, I lost for the German. I was a citizen of the German state with all its rights and duties. Just as I rejoiced in these rights, I was also aware of the duties and did not hesitate to fulfill them. The great example of this was the war. Like all young Zionists, I did not hesitate for a moment to offer the utmost in devotion and duty. I know that none of us here was inferior to a non-Zionist comrade, Christian or Jew. If one or another eventually became weary because, in addition to the hardships of the war, they faced hostile behavior from superiors, it was not related to Zionism. An emerging theory that we needed to preserve ourselves for the great Jewish tasks ahead was vehemently rejected by all the Zionist soldiers I knew. The number of shirkers among us was perhaps not smaller, but certainly not greater than elsewhere. We proved what we had previously said, that we had not become worse, but better citizens after Zionism had freed us from a narrow, egocentric view of life and led us to the recognition of the state and nation's supra-individual ties. Thus, it has been proven in practice that the state has lost nothing through our Zionist stance. This is not the place to defend Zionism against the accusation of being anti-state. These accusations, especially that Zionism deprives the state of people and money, are incorrect and stem from a fearful and narrow view of the state. I repeat: The state has not and does not lose anything through Zionism, but Zionists lose a lot. It is the complex of feelings we call: love of the fatherland.

I understand by this term something to which the state has no claim. There is no law that one should love the fatherland and its people. But this feeling of love is a self-evident consequence of the actual togetherness and oneness. Just as I love myself with the

necessity of my nature, so must I love the state and the people of which I am a part, as the necessary complement of my self. This love, natural and necessary, is yet strongly suppressed or crippled in many people, here overgrown by the narrow interests of one's own person, there by the interests of a party. In the Zionist, the love of the fatherland is displaced by the interest in their own idea. The Zionist sets himself as a member of the Jewish nation in conscious opposition to the German nation, and some even go so far as to consider Palestine their fatherland, Germany only as a kind of transit station. The nuances are numerous, so I will speak only for myself.

Behind the strong feeling for the Jewish nation, to which I avowed myself, the feeling for the German nation receded. I no longer felt at home in Germany. I never wanted to resolve to speak of the German people as the host nation, where one is merely a guest, but I never quite reconciled this point. As students, we differentiated between Palestine politics and Galuth politics, recommending for the latter "national autonomy." What one was supposed to imagine under this, none of us knew. Anyone who decided to study the issue found it to be insignificant, building on Renner and other Austrians. I am still glad today that I immediately recognized the nonsense of this theory in its application to us Jews. I need not go into this, after all this has been clearly stated by Zollschan in a writing that is far too little read.

Thus, although I was saved from the worst errors, I did not reach clarity. In any case, unlike most Zionists, I could defend the thesis that we, as German Jews, had to consider the matters of German politics only from the German perspective, and that there was no Jewish standpoint in German affairs, except for the preservation and promotion of emancipation. I certainly owe my firmness in this position already to the influence of Constantin Brunner, even if for years I did not want to follow his arguments against Zionism. Too solid seemed to me the edifice of Zionist ideology, necessary and beyond all doubt the direction towards Zion. I saw the Jews scattered across the earth, no longer a people and yet still a people, threatened from outside and even more from within. Not a people anymore: the common homeland had been lost for almost two thousand years. The common language had long ceased to be a living language and was not much more than a tradition. And the common faith, bound with the law, had lost its binding force for

countless Jews. Not a people anymore, and yet still a people: the common ancestry remained, and with it the memory of ancient glory and unspeakable suffering. What was this present that is only memory? Where did this path lead, into what darkness? And this very present itself was severely threatened. Everywhere there was anti-Semitism. Wherever Jews turned, they carried hatred with them, and it was worse the more Jews lived in a country. Anti-Semitism had always existed, but in the past, the Jew overcame it through the firm support of the ritual law. Now, as the fence was breached, the danger grew, and the survival of the people seemed seriously threatened. Where there had been firmness, pride, and confidence, there was now faint-heartedness and a tendency towards fearful hiding and flight. Baptism and mixed marriages were decimating the number of Jews in the West. And the East, the great reservoir of the Jewish mass, was preparing to go the same ways, as far as the Jews there did not seem irretrievably lost through oppression and bloody persecution. We saw the stream of emigrants moving across the ocean, hundreds of thousands, and could calculate how long it would take before America closed its doors. Where to with the displaced? Who creates a home for those who are chased from country to country? We looked at ourselves. What about us was still Jewish? The descent and thus the facial expression, that was undeniable. But also certain weaknesses of our body reminded us of the oppressions in the Ghetto. The substitute, the sharpness of the intellect, did not seem to us to be of much value. We had discarded the ritual law, after its foundation, the faith, had been shaken. Besides the descent, which meant little to us internally, there was hardly a single asset that made it worthwhile for us to be called a Jew. But we were proud, and for nothing in the world would we have wanted to give up being what we once were. The swelling tide of anti-Semitism did not frighten us. Indeed, we still had the old Jewish tenacity in our limbs. Even if what we had was little, we held on tight. And as young and hopeful as we were, we wanted to make a greater future out of a small present. If little of Judaism had remained with us, we would become full Jews again. If our people were stunted and dying, it was to gain new life. Renaissance, rebirth, that was the call of the hour! We felt the swelling of forces in the Yiddish and Hebrew literature of the East. But juices were also stirring in us, and among us poets sang of Judah's rebirth. We had a flag, we had a leader, he gave us the goal: Zion! Were we not a people without a

land? Here was the land, the old homeland, the new homeland. Were we not a people without a language? Here it already began to grow, the new Hebrew. So, what we lacked was before us, and we only needed to reach out. It would take endless work to cultivate this land, the spoiled and destroyed, to cultivate it with our people who knew nothing of such work? Oh, it would come to be! We would give what we had, goods and strength and most dearly our lives. And behold, there they were, the pioneers, giving goods and health and life in holy enthusiasm. It was no longer just hope. The heroic Jew had become a reality. What we dreamed was being fulfilled; and though the path was long and thorny, we felt strength within us to walk it. And if we lay down on the way, what did it matter? The following would make it. We loved Judah with a youthfully fervent love, not like the ancients with tears, but from the full strength of our youth, as our honor, as our sacred goal, as the great and beautiful of our lives.

All of this is still alive in me today, as I leave your ranks. It has cost me a hard fight to get to where I am today. The man Constantin Brunner, to whom I owe an infinite debt, here he has taken much that is beautiful from me, and I must also be grateful to him for that. One must be grateful for liberation from error, even if many a colorful dream dissolves in the process. But it is not as though Brunner intervenes with the cold hand of skepticism and causes one to waver where one should remain firm. He is a loyal son of Judaism and knows to speak marvelously of it. If he fights against Zionism, he does it from the fervor of the idea. Out of the ruins of Zionism, I feel something tremendous growing. But of that perhaps another time. Now I want to give you an account of why I am no longer a Zionist.

Departure from Zionism

I. There is no Jewish nation. We German Jews belong to the German nation

I put this thought forward because it is the most important thing we must understand again. It contains the most important and is for the Zionist the hardest to recognize. I cannot evade this thought by telling myself that Zionism does not necessarily depend on Jewish nationalism. That would not even be entirely wrong: Zionism's origin is not actually in the thesis that Jews are a nation, but it grew from the ancient longing of the Jews to be led back to Zion, so that the Kingdom of God might be re-established there. Zionism is Messianism, a Messianism dressed in Western European mechanics and ideology, which has not changed in its essence, even if it now imposes on humans the work that, according to the old belief, God would have to perform. As long as God reserved the work for Himself, Messianism was harmless to us. We could, without completely abandoning it, go into emancipation and thus into the nations, and we still had such a small corner of special hope, over which we ourselves smiled. But in Zionism, we take seriously the task of removing the Jews from the nations to consolidate them into a Jewish nation. Perhaps modern Jewish nationalism is a consequence of messianic Zionism and not its origin, but now Zionism and Jewish nationalism are closely interwoven and inseparable. One cannot be a member of the German nation and at the same time a Zionist. Whoever is a Zionist ceases to feel German. I, however, break with the dangerous game of Jewish nationalism and want to forget it.

The Jews are not a nation. They are a race that is also the carrier of a religion unique to them. We agree that a Jew who gives up the religion does not cease to be a Jew. The Jews are a race, but race has nothing to do with nation.

It seems unnecessary to me to engage in theoretical disputes here, especially over the concept of a nation. We have all repeatedly pondered this; for no numerous definitions

seemed to quite fit the Jewish nation. But where so many and such contradictory definitions exist, what need is there for the definition, we concluded if one simply feels as a nation. We have ultimately given up on wracking our brains over this question. We equated descent with nation and were content with that. So, there is no need to charge against false definitions. It is sufficient if I show that we lack the primitive prerequisites for forming a nation. The overwhelming majority of Jews know this, who do not even think of calling themselves or feeling like a nation.

Who then is the carrier of Jewish nationalism? Almost only the Zionists, who constitute a quite small percentage of Jews. The East European orthodox masses, whom one likes to cite here, do not know what to do with nationalism. They are not national-Jewish; they are messianistic. They do not yet know what it means to be a member of a nation because they have not yet found access to their nations. They are not yet Poles and Russians, indeed - people without a nation, but that does not yet make them people of a Jewish nation. With the old longing, they cling to Zion, from where redemption is supposed to come. Today, two things drive them to Palestine: It is the land where one can faithfully fulfill God's commandment, and it is simultaneously the hope for a roof over their head, the hope for existence, as the possibilities of existence in their homeland diminish more and more, and the emigration countries close off more and more. They speak of the Jewish people and know exactly that it is different from other peoples. Yet, a correct instinct drives them to reject the idea of Jewish nationalism as hostile and harmful.

The emancipated and liberated Jews of Western Europe and America vehemently reject nationalism, with the exception of the five percent Zionists. For them, the gravest dangers threaten, above all, the danger of losing what they have fought hard for and never want to lose, their membership in their nations, and thus emancipation. Both cannot be separated, where the Zionist ideology would like to do so. Emancipation means not only to be free and endowed with all rights and duties but to be a free citizen, a member of the living whole of the people in which one lives. Internal and external emancipation are in close connection, not only historically, where it could be exactly proven with facts, but also in the present and future. Free are only those citizens who form a living unity of a state, and only these constitute a nation.

The Jews are not a nation. I will leave all definitions aside. But one thing must be held fast: there is no nation without a state, and it is nothing but a phrase to cloak this realization for the Jews in such a way as to believe that they are a unique exception subject to different laws. There is no nation without land, without a state. The land and the state first enable the connectedness that fuses a mass of people into a nation, allow the construction of the natural organization that a nation represents. Therefore, even the old usage of the term "Volk" (people) for Jews is misleading; for "Volk" in the sense of the German language means roughly the same as "nation," namely always a group of people combined in a natural organization by their common land. Nothing to do with state or nation is related to descent. You will not find on earth a single nation whose people are of common descent. Thus, descent does not belong to the criteria of the nation. But we have nothing but common descent. What is supposed to make us a Jewish nation? Nation is organization, a natural organization that has arisen from coexistence and must find its expression in a state. Nation and state, that is an organism with its complex of interests. What are the common interests of the Jews? There is only one common interest, emancipation. But that is nothing other than liberation from the exceptional laws (written and unwritten) that prevent us from fully merging with the state, into the nation. Lack of freedom unites us. Once we have achieved freedom, our communal interests end. But we must strive for freedom like all people. Freedom exists for all people only in the state and in the nation.

You will answer that you concede the theoretical aspects about nation and state on many points, and that is precisely why you are Zionists. You despair of emancipation and believe in a solution to the Jewish question only in the union of Jews with their own land into a Jewish nation. So we must talk about the prospects of the Zionist movement. In doing so, I hope to make myself more understandable to you. That one who was a Zionist for twenty years repeats what the most vehement opponents of Zionism say, that will not be readily accepted by you. To deny the Jewish nation may still pass, but to immediately confess oneself as a member of the German nation with all seriousness, in full consciousness of the content of this fact, can only make you shake your heads. But there is only one or the other. To the man with clear and healthy feeling, nothing is more self-evident than that he

knows himself as a member of his fatherland and nation. You who admit this deny these bonds only to the true fatherland and the true nation, clinging instead to an imaginary nation that has not the slightest content for you, and to a fatherland that is not the land of your fathers and the many previous generations, but is other people's land, and can never be the land of your children.

II. The Acquisition of Palestine is Impossible

I will point out just a few facts that I am almost ashamed to present, so often have they already been stated. As a Zionist, one tends to forget them, as I myself knew them for years yet overlooked them. Palestine is a tiny land, about the size of a small Prussian province. Only part of it is suitable for dense settlement. Large areas are mountainous and rocky, are desert, dunes, swamp. How many Jews can this land accommodate? Palestine today has about 850,000 inhabitants, of which 15 percent are Jews, so approximately 700,000 Arabs. Would it be possible to unite a population of, say, 2 million people in the country? I must doubt it, but some assessors even believe in an even larger number of inhabitants. So let's believe in the two million. Of those, if the pace of Zionist immigration significantly accelerated, about 3 percent would be Jews. This is, of course, a vague number. I am considering immigration crises and at the same time that the growth of the Arab population through birth surplus and Arab immigration due to the better living and working conditions brought by the Jews to the country will proceed ever faster. But I am venturing into a realm of speculation on which we will hardly agree. An unassailable fact is that the race for a Jewish majority is already lost today. This was clear to the last Congress (1925), even though irresponsible people in leading positions still spoke of gaining the majority. There is a new buzzword in Zionism, which is "binational," a word that must sound to an old Zionist as what it really is: the end of the Zionist hope. Binational means you are adjusting to the fact that Palestine, the tiny little Palestine that one can walk across from north to south in a few days, does not belong to the Jews but to two nations. The Jewish Rundschau recently wrote that the Jewish population would probably be as large as the Arab one in a few decades. Well, let's just assume for a moment that this is possible,

although such hopes are little more than pie in the sky. So let's assume that Palestine is once inhabited by a million Arabs and a million Jews. Are the Jews then as strong as the Arabs and can they hold the balance? Oh no; because the fiction that Palestine does not belong to Syria and not to the rest of Arabia inhabited by Arabs is, to put it parliamentarily, a fallacy. Even if England maintains the boundary markers between Palestine and the rest of Arabia for a long time, they will fall at some point. Then Palestine is a small province of the great Arabia, and where will the Jews remain who are supposed to hold the balance against the Arabs? Has this obvious thought never occurred to you? No one has dared to speak it out loud; because that alone is already the end of the Zionist hope. In order to think of the impossible hope as possible, we keep making new concessions to reality and finding new shelter for the hope. Today it is still called "binational." How it will be called in two years, I need not ponder. There are already Zionists today who recognize all this. I mean Jabotinsky and his group. He knows there is no other way to a Jewish Palestine than by force, and that alone is true. But just as true is what you object to him, that we cannot apply force because we are far too weak. So: Without force there is no Zion, and there is no force either. Hence, according to the laws of primitive logic, the hope for Palestine must be buried. Without a miracle from God, there is no Jewish Palestine. But it seems to me, one can still be as irreligious, as a Zionist always hopes for a miracle from God.

I have not yet spoken about the possibility of settling Jews in the neighboring countries of Palestine. I do not need to speak about that. Certainly, there is room for countless people there. But who would dare to make the demand to settle further Arab land with Jews. We are now building in Palestine under the protection of the British army. (Will it remain?) But who protects the Jews in the vast Arab world outside Palestine? This thought could only be hatched in the well-guarded major cities of Europe. For reality, it seems to me quite unsuitable. If it really should happen that England keeps the Palestinian border markers up and the Jews of Palestine equal the Arabs in number, and that the two nations do not slaughter each other but maintain peace under the pressure of English police (pacificist dreams about understanding and friendship between Arabs and Jews I may well leave unmentioned): what then is helped? If all this impossible becomes possible,

what then is improved for the Jews? So let's assume, once there lived a million Jews peacefully alongside the Arabs in Palestine. That's about seven percent of all Jews. The highest that Zionism could achieve if all its dreams come true and England supports it indefinitely, would be the unification of seven percent of all Jews in Palestine. We are well aware that this would not solve the Jewish question. For the Eastern Jews, hardly anything would have improved. Their number would have hardly decreased; because during the long process of emigration they would have maintained their old height through natural growth. However, their situation would have worsened significantly in another direction in the meantime. Zionism does not bring them, and will never bring them, any relief, however small. Only the implementation of emancipation can do that. You now think that emancipation is impossible? No, it is only difficult, and will proceed slowly. But before Palestine has a million Jews, the emancipation of Polish Jews will have made great progress, if only the Polish Jews really want it. It must first be earnestly and incessantly sought if one wants to win it, and one must forget all foolish ideas of national autonomy. This is not to say anything against Jewish schools, which are necessary today for numerous reasons. But one should be careful, as Zionists outside Poland do, to oppose the red-white flag with the blue-white one. The Polish Jews must clearly recognize that there is no other way for them than to enter into the Polish nation, to become willing members of the Polish state and nation. They will not recognize and not strive for this as long as the hope of Zionism like a will-o'-the-wisp lights up their dark and difficult path. The path is dark and difficult, I know well, but it is straight and one cannot go astray on it if only the hope for their own state and national existence is finally buried. Zionism does not improve their situation, even if it achieves the highest it still dares to hope for today, but it does immense damage because it prevents them from really wanting and striving for emancipation. Until they recognize this, they will have lost precious years and will truly remain with the Diaspora, instead of really gaining the homeland and fatherland.

Seven percent of all Jews in Palestine! Is that the homeland for the Jewish people? Are seven percent identical with the people? What does Zionism do with the remaining ninety-three to ninety-five million who remain in "Galuth," must remain because they have no place in Palestine? A delicate question for Zionism, which claims the leadership role for

all Jews. Oh, there is an answer so grand that no one understands it: Zionism retreats to the thesis of Ahad Ha'am and declares that it is enough for it to create a center for the Jewish spirit in Palestine. This would cure the rest of the Jews. That this is a laughable notion, we have long known, and when Zionism now takes up this thesis, it does not lose its laughability. Whoever talks about it has no idea what spirit is and that spirit is not made; but whoever knows what spirit is, laughs at the idea that Jews need only go to Palestine, and there the old prophetic spirit will come over them again. He also knows that the old prophetic spirit does not need the return to Palestine to be alive and strong; and he finally knows how the Jews have listened and listen to their prophets. I see before me the colony of pure Ahad Ha'ams, representing the Jewish spirit, and I shudder at the thought that people believe in such things and want to make politics based on it. (By the way, I think highly of Ahad Ha'am because of his early criticism of Zionism.) I believe in the still strong intellectual power of Jewish people. Still, someone arises who in his own way re-creates the words of the prophets anew. He will be listened to just as little as the prophets of antiquity. These are always men who have left the narrowness of the Jewish parlor and taken the expanse of the world into themselves. But let him be consoled who wants to with Ahad Ha'am. Whoever cannot, will probably owe an answer to what will become of the ninety-three percent. Perhaps they are given the old prescription to demand national autonomy in their countries, that is, never really enter into their states. They are advised to read the Hebrew newspapers of Palestine to connect inwardly with the country (which is supposed to be their fatherland). Maybe they should even believe in infusing themselves with new Jewish spirit. But let's leave that. Ninety-three percent of all Jews can never and under no circumstances go to Palestine. For them, Zionism has no recipe. It is over with its leadership role if it abandons ninety-three percent and no longer cares about their further fates. It is over with the whole of Zionism when the homeland for the Jewish people is nothing more than seven percent of all Jews in the "binational" Palestine.

How could I overlook all this for years? I don't know myself. One believes to think, but one dreams. In vain I searched for arguments against all these irrefutable facts. There are none. And when I have admitted to you so far that there might once be seven percent of all Jews in Palestine, I must now say that even this will not be fulfilled. You know it

yourself. The Arabs are a million before the Jews are half a million, and the slogan of binationality will pass like everything else. The day will come when England withdraws its hand from us (this can happen any day, for we have not kept what Chaim Weizmann promised) and then we will be glad to maintain what has been created with unspeakable effort. There are other things that I do not even want to hint at here, but which one should consider when advising someone to go to Palestine, especially the youth who go over with enthusiasm in their hearts, ready to sacrifice themselves - for what?

III. The Alleged Significance of Zionism for the Life of the Jews

Although enough has been said against Zionism with all this, I still want to address whether Zionism, as you believe, is necessary or even beneficial for the life and intellectual stance of the Jews. I will forget that it is a utopia and will not implement even a minimum of its program. I will consider it as a movement with a specific complex of ideas, regardless of their realizability.

You say: Zionism has already significantly influenced the entire Jewry by strongly promoting self-consciousness and the feeling of solidarity. I readily admit this for self-awareness. The fearful hesitation to confess oneself as a Jew has everywhere given way among the Jews under the work of Zionism. I want to duly emphasize and not diminish this merit of Zionism. The promotion of the feeling of solidarity would also be creditable to Zionism if it had not shot far beyond the goal. It overestimates the bonds among Jews. They are not as close as the Zionist theory would have it. Even if their fates must influence each other in different countries, even if they know that all of Israel must stand up for one another, they must not exaggerate this fact and now construct themselves into a Jewish nation. Zionism has fostered the consciousness of solidarity so far that it threatens to become a danger to the Jews.

As for self-consciousness, there is also a limit there. The limit is where one is not satisfied with just being proud but would also like to know what of. Does Zionism give Jewish pride a new, higher content? You affirm this and say: the autonomous settlement in

Palestine will give the Jews the feeling that they are capable of great achievements. They will receive Jewish impulses from Palestine and, in particular, reacquire the Hebrew language. Even those remaining in the Diaspora will slowly reassemble into an intellectual community that has its natural center in Palestine. Well, so many words, so many errors. I try to imagine what Palestine looks like when a million Jews live there who really feed themselves and live in peace with the Arabs. The picture that presents itself to me is somewhat different from Herzl's Altneuland. I must see the Jews as they really are, and see them divided into numerous fiercely fighting groups. Certainly, the influence of a million Jews in Palestine on the overall Jewry is greater than the influence of just as many Jews in New York if they are united. But they are not and never will be, as we know them. There are the contrasts between workers and owners, more still between the old and the new Yishuv, and most of all the religious contrasts, the unbridgeable ones; because Orthodoxy demands the organization of the entire public life according to the law, and the atheist can never bow to it. It starts with ridiculous differences, such as whether football may be played on the Sabbath, and ends with the consuming strife over the highest interests of the state. The Pharisaism of the old Jewish state is a highly interesting, brought to completion, linkage of the religious with the national. One must be clear that the victory of Pharisaism sealed the downfall of the state. It may have maintained the Jews for two thousand years without a state: for the formation of a state, for the national consolidation of the Jews with their own land, it is incapable. If nothing else spoke against Zionism, it would have to break apart on this contradiction.

Thus I see the Jews of autonomous Arab-Jewish Palestine torn by severe internal strife. What should be the effect that emanates from such a community? Even with the most misguided notions about intellectual impact and influence, there remains nothing, absolutely nothing, that could honestly be put forward for this purpose. The strife of the Jews will increase, and the plight of the Jews will increase. For we are clear that nowhere in the entire world must the situation of the Jews be as dangerous as in Palestine. As long as British rule lasts, their security may be guaranteed. But the hatred against them will grow with each new hundred thousand. Some Zionists publicly talk about England having to leave Palestine after fulfilling the mandate, to then leave the fate of the country to the

management of its inhabitants, that is, the Arabs and Jews, who would then peacefully self-govern side by side. There is no stupidity that is not thought and expressed; peace between Arabs and Jews in the small land of Palestine, where then the people crowd, where the Arab millions around multiply the forces of the Palestinian Arabs! Where in the entire world is there peace between two peoples who must inhabit a land because history has arranged it so. As long as one nation does not rule over the other, no peace is possible. But it will not be the Jews ruling over the Arabs, perhaps the Arabs over the Jews, and Palestine will be a worse Galuth (in the sense of the Zionist language) than ever before. This naturally only applies if England removes its soldiers from Palestine. The lives, property, and freedom of the Palestinian Jews remain dependent on England's grace and threatened by catastrophe as soon as a different policy towards the Arabs begins in London. England's interests decide on the life, property, and freedom of our people, and they are truly not the interests of law and freedom that are decisive for English politics, but they are purely commercial and power-political interests that the changing governments assess differently. Zionism as such is independent of this. It cannot succeed with or without England's help. And therefore, there is also nothing with the pride in Jewish achievement. It would be bad for us if the content of Jewish self-consciousness depended on the success or failure of the Palestinian experiment. How can one even utter such a thing if one has even a hint of what achievements Jews can be proud of. But today's Zionist, who can no longer find the true connection with the Jewish past and celebrates Chanukah as the highest national holiday, what does he know of the Jewish achievement of eternal value, what does he know of the still not dried up source of true Jewish achievement. Precisely those who cannot find the way to these sources talk about the significant influence of Palestine on the Jewish spirit. I have already spoken of this and have nothing more to add. The content of Judaism is not of this world. But Palestine is of this world, is politics, and therefore does not touch the core of Judaism.

That Zionism has promoted Hebrew, I admit. We would wish for a widespread knowledge of our ancient language among Jews because it is the language of the Bible, and it is of great significance for the spiritual person to penetrate the Bible without a foreign translation. However, all this has nothing to do with the political hopes of Zionism. But

what will become of the Jews, you ask in horror if they cease to be Zionists? Will they not soon perish? You fear from emancipation and the so-called assimilation associated with it in your view, the destruction of the Jews. What about that? I dare to answer those who ask so anxiously with a counter-question: What does it matter if we really perish? All life is doomed to death, including that of nations. It is not fitting to fear death. As long as one lives, one cares for the preservation of life and yet does not stop the hour of death. Moreover, I do not believe that the Jewish race is destined for imminent extinction. If the number of Jews should decrease, what does it matter? If losses arise through baptisms and intermarriage (which Zionism also does not stop), what does it signify? I have firm confidence that even without specific measures, the Jewish race will continue to exist for a long time. There are no measures to prolong its life. And if we really approached old age and thus death, what of it! If there were no Jews today, the glory of this people would surpass all the glory of all nations. What they have given humanity is more than any people have ever given. But we need not talk about this. The Jews are still full of vigor and prove it in achievements of all kinds. These achievements belong to the nations from whose midst they were created? Certainly. What Jews of the German nation create in terms of values belongs to the Germans, but at the same time to all people who participate in it and always brings glory and honor to the old Jewish name. We are not dying yet. Zionism itself knows this, teaching that a complete absorption of Jews into the nations through baptism and intermarriage, etc., is impossible. These are all, I need hardly say, no arguments for and against the matter at hand. Not even the honor of the Jews demands Zionism. Honor is a high good, a good that demands a lot, even the dedication of life. But one can never give more than one has, and whoever would be a Zionist only for the sake of honor would resemble the famous knight Don Quixote.

No danger threatens us from Jewish distress. Zionism does not eliminate it, but it also has no right to justify its necessity with Jewish distress. Certainly, in a distant future, Zionism will have remedied Jewish distress, indirectly, by reducing the number of Jews in the Diaspora, etc. But these are, as we know today, fantasies. The current distress should not trouble Zionism, it says, because otherwise it would have to neglect its high goal. So it should also not argue that we need Palestine as a land of emigration for the emigration

from Eastern Europe, after America has closed its doors. We certainly need that, and if Palestine may soon show that it is not this land, it will have to be seriously considered whether to try a generous colonization in a more suitable place, not as a homeland for the Jewish people or for such Jews who cannot or do not want to assimilate, but to create a home for those who cannot find a home elsewhere. The efforts in this direction in Russia, which are treated stepmotherly by us because they disturb the Palestine propaganda, seem to me to be of great importance. The fight against Jewish distress is a field in which the Zionists would have to take over a lot from other Jews, whether it is the fight against anti-Semitism, whether it is fraternal help beyond national borders. This mutual help of all Jews, which has always existed, is an outflow of our consciousness of solidarity, the old tribal consciousness, but it has as little to do with politics as other family relationships.

No, if Jewish distress were an argument for Zionism, it should not have chosen Palestine as a settlement land. Here, however, the messianic character of the movement is shown. It is appropriate to reflect on the extent to which Messianism influences modern Zionism, which is quite modern in its methods. For it prescribes the main moment: settlement land can be none other than Palestine. I remind you that Herzl's "Jewish State" left the question open, whether Palestine or another land, and that it was only the Uganda affair that decided this question in favor of Palestine. With what arguments? With exclusively messianic ones. It was expressly rejected to let the current Jewish distress speak because it was allegedly about the final redemption of the people. Yes, Zionism believed when it appeared on the scene to be able to promise this, the redemption of the Jewish people, the end of the two-thousand-year wandering, the promised return to Zion. Compare this with what remains today, even in the view of the most faithful Zionists! This connection of Zionism with Messianism, or rather the fact that the root of modern Zionism lies in Messianism, causes some Zionists to connect the conquest of Palestine with the idea of the promised redemption from all evil. You yourselves do not hold onto this, but perhaps you will derive from it that Zionism originates from the core of Judaism and is necessary regardless of the prospects of its realization. But I stick to what I said above: Zionism has nothing to do with what I call the deep foundation of spiritual Judaism. It also has nothing to do with the promise of the Jewish God who has promised "his" people to lead them back

to Palestine and who now perhaps fulfills this promise. Oh no. But we are not here to talk about that. Let him believe in Zionism who believes in the world-ruler God, and who does not believe in the latter, let him believe in the former for my sake. Then one may also believe in the miracle that today's Zionism is the Messiah, and then one may also believe in its realizability.

When I already knew or suspected all this, I still clung for a long time to the argument that Zionism is the only form of a Jewish overall policy. Therefore, one must hold on to Zionism despite all its weaknesses. The thought may appear small and misguided, it was my last refuge to remain with what was dear and familiar to me. I have also given up this last position of my Zionism and realized: there is no Jewish overall policy, neither in the "Diaspora" nor anywhere else. The Jews cannot be bearers of a common policy because their character as a unified nation has long since been lost, and their interests are different everywhere. An interest in the return of three to seven percent to Palestine under enormous difficulties and dangers, an interest in this impossible expedition they do not have, and those who pretend to see this interest misunderstand the true interest of the Jews. We Jews are people of common descent and thus have a strong family-like connection. But that does not entitle us to be described as a common political factor. We have something else in common, the hatred against us; and you remember that Herzl calls us a nation because we are of common descent and have a common enemy. But the essence of anti-Semitism has been made clear once and for all by Constantin Brunner. This convincing teaching, which has nothing to do with Brunner's anti-Zionism, you should really make your own. Only I fear that Brunner will now be placed on the index of books not to be read all the more certainly by you because of my advocacy for him. The hatred of Jews is the same hatred with which people everywhere hate other people when they can do so with impunity. You will not escape this hatred in Palestine. It would be different only if we could achieve a majority there. Then, indeed, the hatred of Jews would turn into hatred of Arabs (coming from the Jews). But there will probably be nothing with the Jewish majority in Palestine. The hatred of Jews, which not only harms us but also helps us to continue to exist, is therefore nothing that clings to us as a special character. It is also different at all times and in all countries. There is therefore no common fight against it.

We must get used to the idea that we are people of common descent, united only partly by the common faith, otherwise by nothing. But race, as I said above, has nothing to do with nation and state. Only nation has to do with state and state with nation because a nation cannot exist without a state. We must finally get used to the idea that the history of the Jewish nation ended with its downfall almost two thousand years ago. If since then the Jews have been wandering restlessly through the countries of the earth, they do not have the interest of the impossible return home, but only the interest of all people to find a home in a people and state. But that we call emancipation, and this and only this is the common interest of all Jews. There is no other common interest of the Jews. The Zionist action, which wants to represent a common political action, rests on a false basis. It assumes that there is the political Jewish people and wonders why it follows the Zionist slogan so little. We have deceived ourselves when we believed and wanted to make believe that there is such a thing. There is only the one common interest of the Jews, which is actually also solely uniform and an interest commonly to be strived for: the emancipation. We must take root and find a home. But since nowhere in the world is there a place where we could find a common home, and because we can no longer and do not want to anymore, there is nothing else but to continue the process of emancipation that began with the French Revolution and has led to quite good results in Western Europe. In Western Europe and America, the Jews have found a real home. Finding a home does not mean being a guest. Home in England or France or Germany means being a part of England or France or Germany. Thus we German Jews became Germans, who only differ from other Germans in that we descend from the Jewish race, while the others are mostly not more definable race mixtures. Emancipation is not yet complete, yes, it is even in danger again today. But the danger will pass if we only seriously hold on to what we have. By this, I mean that we not only hold on to our rights as citizens but also remain loyal to Germany inwardly despite all hostilities and love it with the love that every unbiased and unled person brings to his fatherland. Then we will survive the current storm and future storms. If one day a storm grows so strong that it actually uproots us, and if one day we are actually driven out, well, then the Germans will drive out a piece of Germany, a piece that is truly worth more than just one percent. Perhaps Germany will then fare as once Spain did, which expelled

its Jews and declined, its Jews who were so loyal to the country that they did not forget for generations that they had once been Spaniards.

I have already said that for the Eastern Jews, the goal is no different: the achievement of emancipation. Let's hope that what has started well in Russia does not soon falter. Now, I must address a bitter reproach you might make against me: that this is a sermon on assimilation. I would have to accept this reproach and calmly bear it, if it had serious content. But I have long wondered in vain what distinguishes Zionists from 'assimilators', as long as the latter are upright Jews. Apart from opinions, they differ in nothing, not in lifestyle, not in forms, not in content. It is a necessity that Jews adapt to their fellow citizens in all external forms. No Zionist has ever doubted this. There are no Jewish forms other than religious ones, except perhaps achievements of the Ghetto, which even the Zionist tries to shed as quickly as possible. But no Zionist wants to miss out on assimilating with others. What we still have and do not want to forget is our ancient racial memory. Whoever forgets this, indeed loses all content of Jewishness. This must be cultivated for our self-preservation, our self-respect, and not least for the sake of the idea that Jews have always been carriers of, which manifested in their genius men and seems to be their task to reveal again and again.

The word assimilation does not frighten me, because I know that through Zionism I have not become a bit more 'Jewish' (as you call it). The best of what I know about Judaism comes from other sources. In the sense of Orthodoxy, we are all assimilators. Indeed, Zionists can be called particularly assimilated because, in addition to everything else, they have absorbed Europe's latest nonsense into themselves: racial theory as the basis of national sentiment. Racial pride and racial hatred poison national sentiment just as religious pride and hatred did earlier. Today it is the race that is raised as a standard, in whose name all is allowed; especially the race, where in Europe there is hardly a single pure race other than the Jewish one. Zionists can be called Jews infected with the disease of racial delusion, not because they preach pride and hatred, but because they draw political consequences from racial consciousness, similar to Jew-haters, which must necessarily be wrong, because race can never be the basis of a political nation. It is not permissible to scorn those Jews who, with the self-evidence of their feelings and intellect, want to remain

Germans, French, English, as assimilators, to see themselves as the faithful and the others as the renegade Jews. This can be reciprocated. The racial memories in individual Jews are not always the same. Some are content to remember the Maccabean victories, as if other peoples didn't have their war heroes, and some are privileged to own the highest thing that made the Jews what they mean to humanity, the spiritual idea.

By the way, the spiritual idea has nothing to do with idealism in the conventional sense. Zionism believes it can boast of being the bearer of Jewish idealism. But so-called idealism alone justifies nothing. The German nationalist youth is also idealistic, and yet what it does is often bad and foolish. People can do the most misguided things with enthusiasm. One can sacrifice oneself out of idealism and kill out of idealism. Devotion to a cause does not yet justify the cause. Certainly, idealism is a higher form of feeling than blasé enjoyment, and where it is not paired with obstinacy, it may well be the beginning of the ascent to the pure idea. The idealism and dedication of the Zionist youth are very, very beautiful. We have missed this type in Jewish youth for a long time. It is a merit of Zionism to have led the youth back to dedication, to the fullness of feeling. This youth shows that Jewish people are not corrupted in health and feeling, only that they have sat in their rooms for too long. I hope the splendid Zionist boys will not take it amiss when I tell them that, using their methods, similar types have arisen among the so-called liberal, nationally German-feeling Jewish youth. But especially to the Zionist youth, I wish that their enthusiasm be directed into the right channels. Idealism does not sanctify the cause. The cause must be right and good; otherwise, it necessarily leads the older youth to disillusionment and disappointment. If the youth, under the influence of idealism, takes life-deciding steps, like emigrating to Palestine, it can happen that he pays dearly for his misdirected idealism, suffering damage to body and soul. You know what I mean.

It is so easy, especially among the youth, to arouse a mood for emigration and longing for distant lands. Things are not all good for Jews in Germany, so out and to the distance, where it is certainly much nicer, where great work beckons and the future is bright. It is easy to create this mood, especially because it is hard to continue working on the emancipation. Those who do not want to, and do not want to stay, let them go where they are driven. And if someone believes they must establish a new Jewish kingdom or

nation in Palestine or elsewhere, let them see how far they succeed. What do today's Jews care, what do their physical need and their inner perplexity care, what does Zionism care, whose minimum program still demands a homeland for the supposedly existing entire Jewish people? Whoever wants to start building a new Jewish people from scratch, whether a fantasist or a madman, let him do his work, as long as it goes, without telling the other Jews that he is working for them. He who I speak of here is today's Zionism. It must slowly admit that the homeland for the Jewish people is not succeeding, and so it finds the way out to see itself as the construction of a completely new Jewish people. Let it say this more and more clearly, so that soon all Jews know that they only mean auxiliary forces to it and that it wants no community with them. Today, in the so-called stage of fulfillment, Zionism is still a romantic dream, only closer to a rude awakening, a romantic dream and not real politics.

Conclusion

I have rid myself of the dream and awakened. That's what I wanted to tell you. That is the content of these pages. They want nothing more. As I wrote them, I sometimes thought you might listen to me. But that is not possible. Perhaps later someone will listen, when the facts speak even more clearly than today. I know from myself how long it takes to give up a beautiful dream. In too many things, decisive things, it means rethinking. This can only happen slowly under the pressure of circumstances and never happens for some. Belief is stronger in most people than thinking. To you, Zionism is not thinking, but predominantly belief. I call this belief superstition, but there is no discussion about that. It is belief, as it was belief to me, and is thus hardly accessible to arguments. If a foundation of belief is withdrawn, it saves itself to another, no matter how fragile it may be. A small example: Zionist theorists have always calculated when we must have the majority, otherwise the whole success is questioned. We already know that the majority will never be achieved. We had neglected the natural increase of the Arabs through birth and immigration. But will any Zionist stop being a Zionist because of this, will they stop the work? Certainly not! Although any smart factory owner, like many Zionist leaders may be, would quickly stop or change his operation when he sees that what he wanted to achieve is not achievable. But Zionism is such a curious mixture of reality and fantasy that the smart calculation, in which Jews are otherwise masters, is excluded. So a year ago I would hardly have read and certainly not heeded the arguments I am presenting. Just as you will read this and put it aside and certainly have a lot of smart things to reply. Nevertheless, I speak.

Maybe I will help some to wake up. But it is a cold and frosty awakening, and it may happen to many as it happened to me, that I asked myself in horror what should now become. Judaism has become so synonymous with Zionism for us that giving up Zionism brought me the anxious question: What now? Only when I saw a way here did I really turn away from Zionism, only now is the renunciation complete. I hardly dare to speak of it yet,

because everything is too new, and yet I must say it in a few words for those who listen to me.

I have already said it, but I will summarize it here: The hardest thing is to renounce all political hopes for the Jews as a national unity once and for all. Do not say: 'I recognize that Zionist hopes are deceptive and Zionism will never achieve its goal; so the time has not yet come, and we must wait until it comes.' The time never comes, what has been will never return again. With irrevocable necessity, our path is prescribed. Dark are the old promises, and woe to the man who builds on them. No one knows their meaning. But clear and unambiguous is our way: to be freed from isolation beside the nations and to enter into the nations. You ask: 'Is this the end, the meaning of the long, long journey?' Do not ask about the meaning. Let each do their own. Only generations reveal the direction of events. Do we have a mission? Many believe in it. But what we are supposed to give to people, according to their opinion, we have already given. We have given a lot, yes, if you look closely, the basis of today's culture. Do we have a mission? Every Jew believes in it deep inside, and many would not believe in Zionism if it were not for the feeling of a mission within them. Whether one believes in it or not, we certainly have special characteristics. Not that all Jews are so or so, but there are characteristics that occur more often in us than in people of other races. In this, we find small and smallest things, and we also find the highest. The highest thing people can have is their relationship to spiritual truth. Great is the number of men among the Jews who are to be named here. We have not kept our best for ourselves. Our Bible has really become the book of books for people through the life and death of that mighty Jew whose name the Jews do not mention, who has become for me the center of living Judaism.

Understand me correctly: We do not want to dissolve, only to enter into the nations. I do not say that we should disappear. We should preserve ourselves and keep ourselves with the best we have. Whoever fears Jewish hatred and wants to hide may be baptized. But let him also know that he will never achieve full humanity by doing so. A Jew can never kill his Judaism without suffering damage to his soul. He cannot put it in the corner, but must elevate it as high as he possibly can, like his other human qualities. I believe in the future of Judaism, just not in a political one. I believe in the possibility of a

new spiritual movement (beyond Orthodoxy), springing from the heart of Judaism. When I say this here, it is not an empty excuse. Someone has already shown the way, and it will not be long before Jews are found who will walk it.